

Registered SIMs reach 61% of total subscribers

PUBLIC telecommunication entities recorded 103.1 million registered subscriber identity modules or SIMs as of July 13 or just 12 days before the deadline on July 25.

The latest count is 61.36% of the total number of subscribers as of December 2022 or the base number used for SIM registration, data from the National Telecommunications Commission showed.

PLDT Inc.'s wireless network Smart Communications, Inc. still led the registration with 48.8 million SIMs registered, which is 73.6% of its 66.3 million subscribers.

Globe Telecom, Inc. follows with 47.04 million registrants, representing 54.21% of its 86.75 million total subscribers, while DITO Telecommunity Corp. posted 7.28

million registered SIMs, 48.64% of its 14.97 million users.

Republic Act No. 11934 or the SIM Registration Act requires all SIM users to register their SIMs under their name or risk SIM deactivation. The law aims to help mitigate the proliferation of text scams and other mobile phone-aided criminal activities.

Department of Information and Communications Technology (DICT) Secretary Ivan John E. Uy previously hinted at the none extension of SIM registration after the agency extended the deadline for another 90 days.

Public policy think tank Infrawatch PH said that the registration period was enough to allow people to register but that the government should consider special cases for still unregistered subscribers.

"The six-month period to comply with SIM registration is more than sufficient to allow the general population of mobile users to undertake registration through online and onsite processes," said Terry L. Ridon, Infrawatch convenor, in a Viber message.

"However, the DICT and telcos should allow late registration for special circumstances, such as users experiencing a continuing unavailability of specific government-issued identification cards, users in isolated and island communities with limited data reception, among others," he added.

Globe echoed this and commended the government for granting users the 90-day extension to register their SIMs.

"This gave our customers more time to finish their SIM registration and allowed us to ensure that

we covered as many SIM users as we could through various initiatives," Globe said in a statement on Sunday.

"We believe SIM users have been given enough time — from December 27, 2022 to July 25, 2023, or a total of 211 days to register their SIMs. As of July 15, Globe has logged over 47.14 million registered SIMs," it added.

Catherine Y. Yang, first vice-president and head of group corporate communications at PLDT and Smart, said that the telco will continue its efforts in getting more customers to register.

"As the country heads into the final stretch of the SIM Registration campaign, Smart continues its intensified efforts, both on-ground and online, to assist our customers in registering their SIMs and comply with the SIM

Registration Act," she said in a statement on Sunday.

"We urge our customers to register their SIMs to avoid SIM deactivation, as well as to protect themselves from text scams and other mobile phone-aided crimes. Our commitment to ensuring that no one is left behind when it comes to SIM registration remains," she added.

MORE EFFORTS FROM TELCOS

In separate press releases last week, Globe and Smart again called on their subscribers to register their SIM cards.

Last Thursday, Globe announced that fully-verified GCash users can now register their SIMs through a simple text until July 19.

Under this new registration protocol, selected Globe subscribers will receive a notification

to register their SIMs by texting "GCASH" followed by their birthday in "mmddy" format to 8080.

"By opting to register via this route subscribers can request GCash to send their account details to Globe," the telco said.

Meanwhile, Smart and PLDT Enterprise urged Smart Satellite (SmartSAT) subscribers to register their prepaid SIM cards.

Albert Mitchell L. Locsin, first vice-president and head of enterprise at PLDT and Smart said that users of SmartSAT SIMs are also required to register under the SIM Registration Act.

To register, individual subscribers or company representatives must fill out the Smart SAT Registration form and e-mail a scanned and signed copy to smartatsimreg@smart.com.ph. — **Justine Irish D. Tabile**

GT Capital sees 'very positive' earnings

TY-LED GT Capital Holdings, Inc. expects to maintain its earnings growth momentum for the rest of the year driven mainly by its various business units, its top official said.

GT Capital President Carmelo Maria Luza Bautista told *BusinessWorld* last Thursday that the company is expecting "very positive" earnings for the year coming off the momentum seen during the first quarter.

"It will be very good... a significant improvement versus last year," he said.

During the January-to-March period, GT Capital booked a consolidated net income of P6.64 billion, up 52% from P4.4 billion a year ago, driven by contributions from its business units.

Mr. Bautista said the company's units Metropolitan Bank & Trust Co.

(Metrobank) and Toyota Motor Philippines Corp. posted record numbers during the first quarter, which significantly lifted the group's numbers.

Metrobank saw its net income jump by 31.3% to P10.5 billion, translating to a 13.1% return on equity.

Toyota more than doubled its consolidated net income for the quarter to P4.5 billion from P2.1 billion in the same period last year.

"We're doing launches [through Federal Land, Inc.], so property would be the third engine," Mr. Bautista said.

Federal Land announced earlier its intention of going into estate development, which will begin with a collection of 10 master-planned, multi-use properties under its Federal Land Communities product line.

It also recently launched a 600-hectare mixed-use development, Riverpark, in General Trias, Cavite.

"This is a major move away from single tower developments into an actual estate because we do have the advantage of a significant land bank," Mr. Bautista said.

He said the company is focusing on its value chains and looking at businesses that are associated with its core units.

"So, it's more on alliances and synergies of the value chain rather than a new sector altogether, *mahirap* 'yan (that is difficult), unless we find a strategic partner," he said.

The company has several strategic global partnerships in its portfolio, including Toyota Motor Corp., Axa S.A., Mitsui & Co. Ltd., and Sumitomo Corp. — **Adrian H. Halili**

Court grants Petron's appeal to set aside P20M in excise taxes

THE COURT of Tax Appeals (CTA) has granted Petron Corp.'s appeal to set aside its tax liabilities worth P20 million representing its wrongly paid excise taxes on the importation of alkylate gas for the period covering Dec. 29, 2014 to April 8, 2015.

In a decision dated July 7 and made public on July 14, the CTA en banc said that alkylate does not fall under substances that are subject to excise tax mandated under the law.

"The payment of excise taxes by petitioner (Petron) upon its importation of alkylate is deemed illegal and erroneous in the absence of a specific provision of law that distinctly and categorically imposes tax thereon," Associate Justice Lane S. Cui-David said in the ruling.

Citing Supreme Court jurisprudence, the tax court said alkylate should not be treated like naphtha gas or other products of distillation that are subject to excise taxes.

The Tax Code imposes taxes on naphtha gas, regular gasoline and similar products of distillation, but not on the ingredients or raw materials that compose them.

Petron was also able to provide its entitlement to the refund by presenting its statement of settlement of duties and taxes, as well as its import entry and internal revenue declaration for the covered period.

Last month, the appellate tax court affirmed its refund to Petron worth P64.33 million representing similar wrongly paid excise taxes on alkylate, ruling that the gas is not subject to excise tax. — **John Victor D. Ordoñez**

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